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15 The passion of Paul Hacker

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Indology, orientalism, and evangelism

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He had a longing to throw himself down, to go down on his knees
Karl Kehren, Werft euch nieder vor dem Herrn in seinem heiligen Tempel

Introduction

Among the many German scholars – missionaries, Romantics, and Sanskritists – fascinated by India the German Indologist Paul Hacker (1913–1979) remains one of the most elusive (and controversial) figures. Internationally, though problematically acknowledged as an expert on Vedānta,¹ Hacker is paradigmatic of the many problems with German Indology. A vociferous critic of India, a country he visited between 1954 and 1955, Hacker nonetheless obsessed about Indian thought, especially Hinduism. For this volume, examining the history of the cultural encounter between India and Germany, we have chosen to focus on this controversial figure as a way of understanding some of the more problematic aspects of this encounter. In particular, we seek to understand how German Indologists, under the pretense of undertaking a “scientific” analysis of Indian thought, were in fact pursuing Orientalist, racial, and evangelical agendas. A look at Hacker’s life, work, and criticisms of India should trigger a fundamental re-evaluation not only of Hacker, but of German Indology as a whole as an academic enterprise.² We shall argue via an examination of Hacker’s comments on Hindu identity, Hindu tolerance, and Hindu ethics, that German Indology was a barely disguised form of religious evangelism.³ Although this article cannot claim to present a comprehensive view of Hacker’s writings, it will hopefully go some way towards showing how deeply troubled he was by the idea of a relationship between Europe and India characterized by intellectual and social parity, and thus initiate a process long overdue: that of a fundamental re-evaluation of German Indology.

Hacker’s life and works

Although Paul Hacker is best known for his work on Vedānta today, the majority of his writings were concerned with religion.⁴ In all, the bibliographic

overview in his *Kleine Schriften* lists thirty-three articles on religion. However, this list understates Hacker's interest in theology, as he suppressed many of his theological contributions, from his bibliographic index to his collected essays.⁵

In his writings, Hacker was deeply concerned with the nature of true religion. A repeated theme in many essays on the topic is the incommensurability of different faiths, especially non-Christian faiths, which, for him, could not be a true means to salvation. His essays are typically highly personal explorations of the contrasting natures of different religions. As his editor notes:

For Paul Hacker, the study of Indian religions and philosophy did not have merely encyclopedic value. The Indologist Hacker cannot be separated from the philosopher and theologian Hacker when it comes to his ultimate goals. For him, the study of Indian thought is oriented towards a contrasting comparison with European and Christian thought; further, towards a Christian influenced evaluation and “reuse” – understood in the sense of the χρῆσις of the Church Fathers – of Indian [thought].⁶

Halbfass is more blunt. According to him:

Through all the textual documentation and historical analysis and triumphant display of philological and chronological evidence, we also hear the voice of an advocate of the European tradition and, more specifically, of a Christian theologian. The historical analysis itself, in all its “objectivity,” reflects but also conceals a very pronounced sense of religious and cultural identity and an uncompromising commitment to certain Christian and European premises and values.⁷

Religion was not only the dominant theme of Hacker's work, but also played a major role in his life. According to Dörmann, a colleague of Hacker's at the University of Münster, Hacker's interest in religion developed early on; he writes:

Paul Hacker was a religious thinker. He came from a Protestant family. His mother taught him to love the Bible and prayer. All his life, he was concerned with the sources of Christian revelation, accepting whole-heartedly the fundamental truths of Christian faith and striving after a very Christian life.⁸

And Karl Kehren notes in his obituary of Hacker:

he had a longing to throw himself down, to go down on his knees, to pray... In the Evangelical church there is no bending of the knees; but he had an intense need for it. Thus, he always received the holy Communion on his knees, that is, adoringly.⁹

Hacker was also a prolific writer on the subject of religion. Besides articles in the *Zeitschrift für Missions- und Religionswissenschaft*, the journal of the Institut

für Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen at the University of Münster, he was also a frequent contributor to a number of other Christian journals. These ranged from Protestant journals such as the *Evangelische Missions-Zeitschrift* (published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft) to the Catholic journals *Radius* and *Una Voce Korrespondenz* (published by the lay organization Una Voce Deutschland e. v. dedicated to reinstatement of the Tridentine or the Latin Mass). Hacker was also deeply involved with religious and liturgical matters, writing regularly for journals such as *Vox Fidei*, *Der Fels*, and *Una Voce Korrespondenz*. As a member of the Una Voce movement (the movement to retain the Tridentine Mass), he also wrote a number of articles criticizing the attempts to open up the Catholic Church to vernacular traditions, especially Indian traditions.¹⁰ Finally, we know that he contributed a number of anonymous articles and/or letters to these and other evangelical journals, but these unfortunately can no longer be identified.

Hacker's theological interest is evident not only in writings immediately concerned with the Christian faith, but it is also a major component of his writings on Hinduism. In Halbfass' assessment, Hacker's engagement with Hinduism was an essential step in the process of his own religious development. Halbfass suggests that Hacker's "intense and personally committed" studies of Advaita Vedānta may have been responsible for his distancing himself from Protestantism.¹¹ Hinduism functioned as a lens for Hacker – one through which he could contemplate his own faith and circumscribe his conception of "true" religion more narrowly. Hacker's engagement with ideas of ritual, action, faith (his translation of *śraddha*), love towards God (his translation of *bhakti*), and the relationship of the individual to God and of the world or of reality to God in Hinduism led to a change in his view of Christianity. Broadly, speaking, we may structure his comments on Hinduism under two headings:

- 1 The concept of Hinduism/"Neo-Hinduism," and
- 2 The concept of tolerance and/or "inclusivism."

We shall first examine these two aspects of his thought before considering more closely how Christian notions of personhood and personal salvation (more precisely, of personhood as a precondition for personal salvation) shaped Hacker's views of Hinduism.

Polemics against Hindu identity

Hacker published numerous articles on Indian philosophy (especially Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta). However, he distinguished these articles on the philosophical schools of ancient India from his writings on Hinduism or, as he preferred to call it, "Neo-Hinduism." According to him, Hinduism was essentially an illegitimate concept, an attempt by contemporary Indians writers such as Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan to project a unified Indian identity. By appending the prefix "neo" to the word "Hinduism," he sought to draw attention to its novel,

derivative character.¹² As he clarified in a 1970 address to an audience at the University of London:

The term “Neo-Hinduism” seems appropriate to bring out the characteristic traits of what Farquhar liked to call reforms and what D. S. Sarma saw as a renaissance. Neo-Hinduism in fact claims to be Hinduism. But it is a novel Hinduism. Its substantial identity with earlier Hinduism is open to question. Even its comparability with the general features of the European Renaissance seems doubtful. I may note that as a synonym for “Neo-Hindu” I occasionally use the word “modernist.” This word also brings out the sense of the prefix “Neo”.¹³

Against the claim of a religious tradition that had existed since antiquity, Hacker advocated the use of historical research to demonstrate the constructed nature of (the concept of) Hinduism. There were three aspects to this project of his:

- 1 The claim that the advocates of Hindu unity were Western trained or Western inspired and hence not authentic representatives of the tradition.¹⁴
- 2 The claim that there was a distinct indigenous tradition that existed independent of the attempts of the Western-trained advocates of Hindu unity and hence, in contrast to the latter, retained a “living continuity” with the past.¹⁵
- 3 Hacker also claimed that Hindu (or “Neo-Hindu”) efforts at inculcating a Hindu identity were a response to feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis Western civilization.¹⁶

Concretely, Hacker saw “Neo-Hindu” advocates as being in competition with Western culture and faith. Whereas the tradition passively received Western cultural influences, the advocates of Hindu unity, having become “distressed and offended” by the overwhelming success of the West, were engaged in a process of rivalry. Thus, they attempted to compensate for the deficits of Hinduism by borrowing concepts from Christianity. Hacker did not see the development of contemporary Hindu identity as part of an organic process of evolution. For him, the break between contemporary Hinduism and its past was absolute. All development that had occurred since the colonial encounter could be attributed to a kind of “arms race” between the two faiths. In two examples, he portrays this process in terms of what we might today call intellectual property theft:

The willingness to assimilate foreign ideas goes even to the extent that a work of Christian origin can be remodeled in a Hinduized form. Among the *Gītā* Press tracts I discovered a booklet with the title “Faith in God” (*Bhagavān par viśvās*). The very title seemed to me to point to foreign origin. I succeeded in identifying the source. It was Brother Lawrence’s “Practice of the Presence of God.” A comparison with the original revealed that all references to Jesus Christ and to specifically Christian doctrines had been expunged. I will give one example. In the English version of the

original there is a passage "...we ought, without anxiety, to expect the pardon of our sins from the Blood of Jesus Christ, laboring simply to love him with all our heart." The Hindu revision of this reads as follows: "When we love God with all our heart, our sins are automatically wiped out." The characteristic difference consists not only in the omission in the Hindu version of Christ's expiatory suffering. In addition, the Christian's hope is changed into certainty, and forgiveness is turned into effacement, which is a mechanical process.... The changes of the Hinduized text imply a depersonalization.¹⁷

In this rhetorically charged passage, Hacker presents Christianity reductively as a uniform and continuous tradition, without taking into account the rich debates and many historic contingencies that shaped Christianity and continue to do so. Thus we do not hear about whether the original *kerygma* of the Christian Church was Johannine love or a proclamation of the end of the days, or of the debates between the positions of Arius and Athanasius, or those between the Gnostics and St. Augustine who constructs his Christian theology on Neoplatonist foundations. Likewise, Hacker does not tell us that Bankim could have *also* read *Gita* 18.66, where this very doctrine appears. He also does not countenance the possibility that the two traditions might have arrived independently at the same insight.

On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasizes that these attempts at adopting or inculcating the values of another faith (we leave aside for the moment the question of whether love for God is a uniquely Christian or Indian value) are not motivated by a religious conviction of the superiority of Christianity. (Such a conviction might conceivably have led to conversion.) Rather, they are rooted in an awareness of the superiority of Christian ethics, albeit one where the adopters were unwilling to honestly acknowledge this superiority by converting to Christianity. According to him, the prevailing "motif" among "Neo-Hindu thinkers" is "the desire to prove that Hinduism is a religion equal or even superior to Christianity."¹⁸ Religious nationalism thus trumps the opportunity for ethical realization no less than it does epistemological insight. What emerges as a consequence is a hybrid religion, a "Neo-Hinduism" that is just as much a "Neo-Christianity," since it is a Hinduism renewed and purified by the influx of Christian ideals. Hacker writes:

Here [i.e., in the desire to prove the superiority of Hinduism to Christianity], as well as in the attempts to modernize ancient Hindu ideas, positivism—and also in the last few decades modernistic and liberal Christian theology—have been of great help¹⁹

Hacker specifically cites the nineteenth century reformer, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894), as an example of such religious rivalry. According to him, Chatterjee, through a process of cultural comparison, assimilation, and indigenization, laid the foundations for the "Neo-Hindu" appropriation of Christian ethics.

As he describes the process, the origins of Chatterjee's ethics of universal love (expressed in his work *Dharmatattva* or *Principles of Religion* of 1888) lay in an encounter with the Gospel of John. But although Bankim realized the emancipatory potential of this text, according to Hacker, his nationalism prevented him from accepting the superiority of Christian faith. Instead, he resorted to a process of assimilation followed by self-assertion that Hacker describes as follows:

Bankim appropriates these ideas for Hinduism with the vigorous words: "I think this already shows the superiority of Hinduism over all religions." Here he shows what his motive is. Even in the Prahlāda legend, the above idea does not appear as explicitly as in Bankim, and in other Hindu texts it does not appear at all. On the other hand, it appears just as explicitly elsewhere, in the New Testament: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar.... And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (I John, 4, 20–21). Bankim must have learned the idea from this source, whether directly or indirectly, before he could have derived it from Prahlāda's ethic.... Bankim must have known that this idea is the core of Christian ethics, and we can thus easily understand why he wanted to claim it from his own religion, which he was trying to vindicate.²⁰

Regarding Bankim's comment that "God is love," Hacker argues that, "this, too, could hardly have been without Christian influence (I John, 4, 16)." Although Bankim "makes the one statement into two, since he distinguishes between reverent love (*bhakti*) and love of man (*prīti*), and ... gives the idea a completely Hindu basis,"²¹ Hacker argues that the kernel of the thought is unmistakable: It is the Christian idea of the loving relationship between God and man. This idea, Hacker claims, cannot be found anywhere in traditional Hinduism, i.e., in Hinduism before the advent of Western missionaries. Hence, he concludes that it could only have entered Hinduism from Christianity through a peculiar tendency of Hinduism to appropriate or assimilate other viewpoints he characterizes as its "inclusivism."

Hindu inclusivism and Christian tolerance

Of all Hacker's neologisms, none has attracted as much scholarly interest as "inclusivism."²² Although the earliest occurrence of the term can be dated to 1957,²³ Hacker's most important reflections on the topic occur in an article published posthumously in 1983.²⁴ In this article (titled simply "Inclusivism"), he defines "inclusivism" as the tendency, found among Indian religions, to assimilate the representations and ideas of other religions without an explicit reflection on this process or an explicit engagement with the alien tradition. "Inclusivism means," Hacker clarifies, "that one declares that the central idea of an alien religious or confessional [weltanschaulichen] group to be identical with this or that idea of the group to which one belongs."²⁵ Moreover:

Frequently, inclusivism entails the explicit or implicit claim that the alien element that is declared to be identical with one's own is in some way subordinate or inferior to the latter. Further, a demonstration of the fact that the alien element is identical with one's own is usually never undertaken.²⁶

According to Hacker, “inclusivism” as an “intellectual form”²⁷ is “characteristic of this [i.e., Indian] cultural sphere.”²⁸ As such, it can be traced throughout the history of Indian thought: “it goes back to the late hymns of the Ṛksamhitā and then extends through the entire anonymous literature, and remains vital down to the present, where Neohindus writes in English.”²⁹ However, “inclusivism” should not be understood as merely an occasional or even a constant feature of Indian intellectual history. Rather, Hacker argues for seeing it as the defining characteristic of the Indian mind: it is both a sign of Indians’ “extraordinary mental pliability and flexibility”³⁰ and “the expression of a feeling of inferiority.”³¹ He distinguishes this state from tolerance, which refers, rather, to a conscious, self-reflective engagement with alien cultures or religions. “Inclusivism,” in contrast, “grows out of a frustration, a consciousness of inferiority.”³²

Thus, in order to grasp Hacker’s concept of “inclusivism” more fully, we need to trace its relationship to its counter-concept, that of “tolerance.” For Hacker, these two terms are polar opposites. “Tolerance” is a characteristic of Christian faith; it is a sign of intellectual maturity, confidence, openness, and honesty. In contrast, “inclusivism” is the hallmark of Hinduism and/or its precursor or constituent faiths. Under the guise of a superficial acceptance of all viewpoints, Hacker believes, it is, in fact, a crude attempt at asserting religious supremacy.

Looking at Hacker’s concept of “inclusivism” against the background of its counter-concept lets us see more easily what is essential to Hacker in this concept. Hacker argues that “inclusivism” is not an expression of a desire for greater syncretism. Indeed, for him, the syncretic element falls out of consideration since, according to him, there is no uniform religion corresponding to the term “Hinduism.” The term, as he reminds us, is only a “Sammelbezeichnung,”³³ a collective term for a plurality of faiths, introduced by the Western scholar; consequently, Hinduism cannot but be “syncretic.”³⁴ Further, the definition of “inclusivism” as a form of syncretism is underdetermined, because it does not clarify exactly what sets “inclusivism” apart from “tolerance.” Here, Hacker offers three suggestions: divergence, that is, the pluralistic character of Hinduism; popular indifference, which manifests in the fact that “now this God, and now another” is worshipped; and unreflected processes of absorption. According to Hacker, these three aspects are a consequence of Hinduism’s essentially polytheistic and monistic character. Tolerance, in contrast, refers to a specific form of forbearance found (only) in a monotheistic and absolute religion: it is an expression, in the final analysis, of Christian charity. In contrast, a polytheistic religion is incapable of articulating a conception of “tolerance,” since it lacks a basic prerequisite for the concept: a sense of “exclusivism.” In sum, “tolerance” is the form of “inclusivism” which an “exclusive” religion takes on when it

decides to forbear the others. In contrast, the “forbearance” inclusive religions show towards others is not even “forbearance,” but merely a form of apathy.

In yet another passage, Hacker clarifies that “one can genuinely speak of tolerance” only where one is “clearly conscious of the foreignness of certain phenomena and nonetheless, in one’s intellectual encounter [with them], forbears them or grants them spiritual validity.”³⁵ In contrast, “these *absorptions*” are “primarily not instances of Hinduism granting the foreign element validity inasmuch as it takes them up within itself.” “Rather, in the course of centuries, the foreign tribes had adapted more and more to the customs of their Hindu neighbors.” These are “mutual *adaptations* that, in large part, occurred without reflection, processes of [organic] growth that were not particularly conspicuous in their individual stages and hence also cannot be grasped historically but merely inductively.”³⁶ Hence, for a process of assimilation to be considered an instance of “tolerance” it must satisfy three criteria: a clear consciousness of foreignness; a conscious decision to grant validity; and a reflection that accompanies the stages of his process.³⁷ In particular, what separates these two concepts or these two sets of criteria is the fact that the one entails a clear sense of a historical break, whereas the other only has an implicit relation to its history. Since this consciousness of an explicit break with history is typical of Christianity in particular, for which the appearance of the savior is a *historical* occurrence, it can hardly be seen how Hinduism should adopt this standard.

Hacker and the Indo-German dialogue

How are we, writing about the cultural encounter between Germany and India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, to address Hacker’s problematic legacy to German Indology?

An earlier generation of scholars, among them Hacker’s student Lambert Schmithausen, was much less critical of Hacker’s legacy. Schmithausen, in his foreword to the volume *Philology and Confrontation*, describes Hacker’s scholarship as being “characterized by a high level of reflection on the methods and concepts he used.”³⁸ And Halbfass, while more critical, nonetheless takes his work seriously: in his assessment, “there can be little doubt that he [Hacker] has left us with a rich supply of precious building materials, as well as with some major, but equally precious, stumbling blocks.”³⁹ For a post-Saidian generation, however, that has grown up with the awareness that academics were frequent collaborators in the Orientalist enterprise, Hacker’s work presents a much greater problem. How are we to make sense of the fact that one of the respected and influential Indologists of the twentieth century harbored deep resentments against Hinduism, resentments that shaped his view of the religion as articulated in countless articles, books, and essays? How are we to make sense of the fact that Hacker, over a period of nearly thirty years, hid and dissembled the extent of his involvement in extreme right-wing evangelical movements, all the time using his status as an academic scholar and professor to lend weight to his claims?⁴⁰

As a scholar whose ideas on method, on historical inquiry, on the need for a genealogy of Hinduism, on the concepts of soul, spirit, personhood, and Hindu identity have decisively shaped the discourse on India, Paul Hacker matters to us today. Much of the received wisdom on Indian thought today is (for example, the question of which of Śāṅkara's works are authentic) dependent, either directly or indirectly, on his work.⁴¹ It is also not an exaggeration to state that Hacker's ideas on method, as articulated in his 1959 article, are today constitutive for the discipline of Indology.⁴² And, finally, many, using the veil of scientific sobriety Hacker's work gives them, have continued his anti-Hindu polemics in the name of so-called critical engagements with Hinduism.⁴³

On the one hand, it is clear that Hacker was a product of his age. Born just a year before World War I, Hacker served in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front from 1939 to 1945. After the war, he never publicly discussed his experiences with Nazism. In all his writings, there is not a single reference to the war or the Holocaust. In public, he maintained the front of an unproblematic critical consciousness, implying that the war did not make any significant difference to his political outlook. Yet, until his death in 1979, he remained an apologist for Western cultural supremacy. He advocated a program of radical evangelism to inculcate and integrate Indians into Western faith as cultural inferiors. His writings are deeply impregnated with the spirit of Orientalism, anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmanic polemics. Hacker also feared a critical Indian response. Against the postwar critics of Western exploitation and violence such as Radhakrishnan, Hacker defended the superiority of European civilization. He denied the possibility of any kind of mutual understanding or dialogue between different religions and cultures. For Hacker, the gulf between his own Western, European, and Christian culture and all other cultures was absolute. In his criticisms of the Indian Church and of Amalorpavadass, he attempted to undermine the prospect of a bridge between cultures. Even Indian Christians were acceptable to him only insofar as they acknowledged and accepted their cultural inferiority, i.e., only as long as they integrated themselves into a *culturally Western* Church. For him, the idea that they might retain even a trace of their cultural identity (wearing shawls rather than stoles to service, for example,) was anathema. They had to adopt the cultural symbols and norms of the conquering culture and to do so in full awareness of its alterity, that is to say, of themselves as a defeated and colonized race. A positive appropriation of Christian tradition was denied them.⁴⁴

On the other hand, there is clear and undeniable evidence that Hacker was aware of the problems with his views. Well aware of the conflict between his evangelism and his professional duties, he deliberately concealed the extent of his involvement in the evangelical movement. Besides suppressing his evangelical publications from the list of works appended to his *Kleine Schriften*, he also resorted to authoring anonymous articles and letters in fringe publications.⁴⁵ We cannot make the argument (as Schmithausen does)⁴⁶ that Hacker's Indological writings and his religious polemics were two completely distinct sides of his personality. The fact that he chose to conceal his religious extremism suggests

that he was well aware of the damage these publications, if ever discovered, would do to his reputation as a scholar. Hacker was also aware of the weight his position as a professor lent to his pronouncements on India. In all his contributions to evangelical periodicals and fringe pamphlets, even his letters to the editor, he signed himself either “Prof. Paul Hacker” or “Prof. Dr. Paul Hacker.”⁴⁷ Further, in reviews for academic journals such as *Theologische Revue*, although he was pursuing Christian polemics (especially against the idea of common points between Christian and non-Christian faiths), he did not hesitate to appropriate the terms “religionswissenschaftlich” (roughly: from the perspective of religious studies/from the perspective of the science of religion) to prosecute his claims.

Hacker’s so-called scientific, Indological contributions thus cannot stand as an independent body of work – independent, that is, of the *other* body of work he chose to conceal. He would not otherwise have feared discovery and evaded a confrontation between these two sets of writings. Well aware that his polemical writings implicitly underwrote his “studies” of Indian thought and, if known, would hence cast these in a completely different and less flattering light, he chose to suppress the former and present the latter as his genuine legacy. In doing so, he put forth an artificial image of himself: as a scholar who was merely interested in applying the “text-historical” method to create objective genealogies of Indian concepts.⁴⁸ Yet, a critical reading of these genealogies shows that what is at stake in them is a demonstration of the fact that Hinduism never had nor could develop a genuine concept of personhood, such that the concept of personhood becomes the distinguishing mark of Christianity. Arif Dirlik has recently proposed that Orientalism was “the product of an unfolding relationship between Euro-Americans and Asians, that required the complicity of the latter in endowing it with plausibility.”⁴⁹ But in the case of Hacker, it is hard to see how Indians could have been complicit in endowing his narrative with plausibility; on the contrary, his success rested on a systematic (and cleverly engineered) falsification of the historical record *coupled with* an exclusion of Indians from discourse.⁵⁰ Hacker cleverly constructed ideas of the impersonal nature of Hinduism, of its uncritical, ahistorical nature, of why its spokespersons (such as Vivekananda or Radhakrishnan) were inauthentic representatives of the tradition, to ensure that no Hindu response *could* be forthcoming. Where Indians such as Amalorpavadass sought to evolve local and, for them, more authentic forms of worship or belief, he decried them as having fallen prey to Brahmanizing influences, the much decried “saffronization wave,” a thesis whose after-effects we continue to experience in the debate on secularism today. Since any and all forms of indigenous cultural response, whether intellectual articulation of positions (Bankim), historical evolution (Vivekananda, Radhakrishna), adaptation (Amalorpavadass) were suspect, the only option for Indians, Hindus, and Christians alike, was to offer themselves up, completely open and defenseless, to a Western master narrative.

Further, Hacker’s analysis overlooks important aspects of the political situation of the “Neo-Hindus.” Driven more by crude zealotry than any scholarly concerns, he forgets that their intellectual effort was less about denying the

1 validity (or, as Hacker would have it, the superiority) of Christianity than about
 2 the struggle for independence from an unjust colonization. Many Indian freedom
 3 fighters (among them Gandhi) in fact specifically incorporated Christian prayers
 4 into their meetings and speeches. They did not see themselves as exclusively
 5 Hindu nationalists, but as aiming at a pan-Indian revival. In this revival, they
 6 were fully capable of critiquing their own culture or their own failings (as
 7 Gandhi did, for example, of violence, segregation, or repression of women). To
 8 be sure, in this search for national and social renewal, they also criticized
 9 Western civilization, especially in the form of unjust and exploitative colonial
 10 policies. But even in this critique, they were fully capable of distinguishing
 11 between Christianity as a faith and as an institution and an ideal. Gandhi
 12 famously remarked, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your
 13 Christians are so unlike your Christ.” With this one sentence, Gandhi decon-
 14 structs Hacker’s facile identification of European culture with ethical superiority,
 15 and demonstrates that it is entirely possible to accept Christian values without
 16 also having to conform to the Western cultural norms Hacker upholds.

17 Paul Hacker thus matters to us because many of the tropes or strategems he
 18 introduced or refined are the very ones that Indology relies on today. It is true
 19 that few Indologists today share Hacker’s religious fundamentalism. After his
 20 death, Indologists affected embarrassment with his religiosity and quickly sought
 21 to expunge this fact from their history books.⁵¹ Yet, it is precisely these aspects
 22 of his *oeuvre* that today deserve attention, because they have been completely
 23 internalized in Indology: To carry out *critical* scholarship in Indology means not
 24 to examine one’s own past and one’s presuppositions critically, but to undertake
 25 a critique of the Indian tradition. Similarly, for Indians to be critical means not to
 26 engage in a refinement, a renewal, and a development of tradition (as, for
 27 example, Radhakrishnan and Amalorpavadas were attempting to do), but to
 28 share in the Western critical posture. In less obvious ways, other German Indolo-
 29 gists too shared in Hacker’s evangelical, enlightenment program, as we have
 30 argued in a forthcoming book.⁵² A critical engagement with this problematic
 31 legacy of German Indology remains a task for a future work.

Notes

- 35 1 See, for example, the work of Sengaku Mayeda and Tillman Vetter, who have con-
 36 tinued Hacker’s work on Vedānta. Mayeda and Vetter not only share Hacker’s chrono-
 37 logical approach, but also explicitly based their chronologies on Hacker’s work.
- 38 2 Although German Indologists affect embarrassment with Hacker’s extreme religi-
 39 osity, they nonetheless found his polemics against tradition and, especially, his
 40 defense of the scientificity of the German approach vis-à-vis Indian approaches useful.
 41 Along with his teacher Willibald Kirfel (1885–1964), Hacker is considered one of the
 42 founding figures of so-called *Textenschichtung* or *Schichtenanalyse* (i.e., layers anal-
 43 ysis). Many of Hacker’s students and followers (for example, Wilhelm Halbfass,
 44 Lambert Schmithausen, and Gerhard Oberhammer), though aware of the problems
 45 with his work, portrayed it as scientifically legitimate. His work on Advaita Vedānta
 is frequently cited today, albeit without an understanding of its historical and bio-
 graphical context.

- 3 See Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) for a wider discussion of the theological roots of German Indology.
- 4 Against fourteen published articles on Vedānta, he published fifteen articles on Hinduism (and/or “Neo-Hinduism”), eight articles on theology (three of these directly concerned with India and/or Hinduism), two articles on the concept of the person in Vedānta, one article on spirit in Vedānta and Neoplatonism, an article on “chrēsis” in Christianity, and countless reviews on Hinduism including four review essays in *Zeitschrift für Missions- und Religionswissenschaft (Journal for Missionary and Religious Studies)*. In addition, two articles on Hinduism and on the Church in India were published posthumously (and are thus not included in his collected essays).
- 5 We may never know exactly how many such articles Hacker published, since many were published anonymously, but we have so far uncovered forty-eight of these articles.
- 6 Lambert Schmithausen, “Vorwort des Herausgebers,” in *Kleine Schriften*, (ed.) L. Schmithausen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1978), p. v.
- 7 Wilhelm Halbfass, “An Uncommon Orientalist: Paul Hacker’s Passage to India,” in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Tradition and Modern Vedānta*, ed. Wilhelm Halbfass (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 9–10.
- 8 I. Dörmann, “Foreword,” in *Theological Foundations of Evangelization* (Sankt Augustin: Steyer Verlag, 1980), p. 3.
- 9 Karl H. Kehren, “Werft euch nieder vor dem Herrn in seinem heiligen Tempel: In Memoriam an Paul Hacker,” *Una Voce Korrespondenz Una Voce Korrespondenz* 9, 2 (1979): 114. According to Kehren, this was one of the main reasons for Hacker’s conversion to Catholicism in 1962.
- 10 These criticisms reach a crescendo in the late writings especially “Modernismus in der Kirche weltweit. Zum Beispiel: Indien,” *Vox Fidei: Stimme des Glaubens* 5,10 (May 1978): 4–8 and “The Situation of the Church in India,” in *Theological Foundations of Evangelization* (Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1980), pp. 79–100.
- 11 Halbfass, “An Uncommon Orientalist,” p. 15.
- 12 In addition, the *rhetorical* uses of this term to characterize contemporary Hinduism as somehow inauthentic and illegitimate should be borne in mind. “Neo-Hinduism,” according to Hacker, is neither reformed nor evolved nor undertakes a reinterpretation to suit contemporary political, socio-economic, and existential needs. It therefore offers the perfect pretext for a continued program of evangelization in India, such as Hacker explicitly called for (see the penultimate section of this chapter).
- 13 Paul Hacker, “Aspects of Neo-Hinduism as Contrasted with Surviving Traditional Hinduism,” in Halbfass, *Philology and Confrontation*, p. 230.
- 14 Hacker, “Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,” p. 231.
- 15 Hacker, “Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,” p. 232.
- 16 Hacker, “Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,” pp. 232–233.
- 17 Hacker, “Aspects of Neo-Hinduism,” p. 236.
- 18 Paul Hacker, “The Concept of Dharma in Neo-Hinduism,” in Halbfass, *Philology and Confrontation*, p. 258.
- 19 Hacker, “The Concept of Dharma,” p. 258.
- 20 Paul Hacker, “Schopenhauer and Hindu Ethics,” in Halbfass, *Philology and Confrontation*, p. 290.
- 21 Hacker, “Schopenhauer and Hindu Ethics,” p. 291.
- 22 See, for example, the contributions accompanying Hacker’s own article in the volume *Inklusivismus: Eine indische Denkform*, ed. Gerhardt Oberhammer (Vienna: Akad, 1983).
- 23 Paul Hacker, “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus,” *Saeculum* 8 (1957): 167–179; for a history of the concept in outline, see Wilhelm Halbfass,

- 1 “‘Inklusivismus’ und ‘Toleranz’ im Kontext der indo-europäischen Begegnung,” in
 2 Oberhammer, *Inklusivismus*, pp. 29–36. Halbfass traces the evolution of the concept
 3 from the 1957 article to the 1979 article, and argues that “this concept stands at the
 4 center of his [i.e., Hacker’s] intellectual engagement with the Indian tradition.” Halbfass,
 5 “‘Inklusivismus’ und ‘Toleranz’,” p. 29.
- 6 24 Paul Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” in Oberhammer, *Inklusivismus*, pp. 11–28. The article
 7 is based on the manuscript of an address to the University of Hamburg in 1977 and
 8 expanded in a second address to the Institute for Indology of the University if Vienna
 9 on October 13, 1977.
- 10 25 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 12.
- 11 26 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 12.
- 12 27 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 11; cf. also the comments on “intellectual behavioral
 13 modes” and “intellectual schema.”
- 14 28 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 11; cf. also Hacker’s conclusion that “inclusivism” is
 15 “restricted to India.” Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 28.
- 16 29 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 14.
- 17 30 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 14.
- 18 31 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 20.
- 19 32 Hacker, “Inklusivismus,” p. 21.
- 20 33 See previous note and see also Paul Hacker, “Die Idee der Person im Denken von
 21 Vedānta-Philosophien,” *Studia Missionalia* 13 (1963): 49, n. 43.
- 22 34 Paradoxically and irrationally, while he denies the concept of a single monolithic
 23 entity called “Hinduism,” Hacker nonetheless believes that there is at least *one*
 24 common feature that unites all these different manifestations: *anxiety* towards a rival
 25 religious traditions, which manifests itself as “inclusivism.” The feature alone runs
 26 from the earliest Vedic hymns down to contemporary Hinduism as well as its “Neo-
 27 Hindu” incarnations.
- 28 35 Hacker, “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus,” p. 171.
- 29 36 Hacker, “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus,” p. 171.
- 30 37 Note that these three elements can be mapped one-to-one onto the three criteria for
 31 “inclusivism” above: the syncretism inherent to pluralistic traditions excludes a clear
 32 consciousness of foreignness; popular indifference is the opposite of a conscious deci-
 33 sion to grant validity, and unreflected processes of absorption are, of course, the
 34 counter-concept of a reflected process.
- 35 38 Lambert Schmithausen, “Foreword,” in Halbfass, *Philology and Confrontation*, viii
 36 and see Schmithausen, “Foreword,” p. vii.
- 37 39 Halbfass, “An Uncommon Orientalist,” p. 18.
- 38 40 At least some of Hacker’s colleagues were aware of Hacker’s evangelism. In their
 39 respective obituaries of their teacher, both Schmithausen and Rüping mention Hack-
 40 er’s passionate faith and the intertwining of Indological and theological concerns in
 41 his work, but do not undertake a critical examination. Klaus Rüping, who was Hack-
 42 er’s PhD student and later succeeded him to the chair at Münster was also aware of
 43 Hacker’s activities writing for fringe publications. Thus in a “Nachtrag” to Hacker’s
 44 official bibliography in the *Kleine Schriften*, he lists five of his theological publica-
 45 tions, but justifies not presenting a full list on the ground that: “Theologische Publika-
 46 tionen ohne engeren Bezug zu Indien werden in den hier vorgelegten Nachträgen
 47 nicht aufgeführt.” Klaus Rüping, “Paul Hacker (6.1.1913–18.3.1979),” *Wiener
 48 Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 25 (1981): 17. Thus, beyond Hacker the
 49 attempt to suppress Indology’s evangelical aspects and uphold its scientific preten-
 50 sions continues.
- 51 41 For example, see Bradley J. Malkovsky, “Introduction: The Life and Work of Richard
 52 V. De Smet, S. J.,” in *New Perspectives on Advaita Vedānta: Essays in Commemora-
 53 tion of Professor Richard De Smet, SJ*, ed. Bradley J. Malkovsky (Leiden: E. J. Brill,
 54 2000), p. 9.

- 42 This is especially true of his assertion of the objective, critical and non-religious
5 nature of Western scholarship as compared to Indian scholarship. In a recent review,
6 Hanneder asserts:
7

8 There is nevertheless some misunderstanding between traditional Indian and
9 Western academic scholarship.... The tension between the two methods of
10 scholarship, if I may add a few thoughts on the topic, is in some respects similar
11 to the relationship between theology and "Religionswissenschaft." Theology con-
12 ceived as the academic side of the practice of a religion can include a scientific
13 investigation of the subject, but for a theologian his subject will always be more
14 than "just" a topic for research. In a similar way, the pandit's proficiency in a
15 subject is often coupled ... with a certain way of life and it may be difficult to
16 divorce the academic aspect from the Pandit identity. Since he is supposed not
17 only to function as a mere scholar, his view of the culture he embodies through his
18 erudition is necessarily more holistic. "Western" Indology with its specifically
19 historically oriented, critical approach, had to make use of the Indian *pānditya* in
20 order to get, as much as possible, first hand information, but it could not accept its
21 theological dimension without compromising its aims as a historical subject. Since
22 this source of misunderstanding persists until to date, it should be made clear that
23 the "Western" approach is not to belittle traditional Indian learning, but a meth-
24 odological necessity.

- 25 See Jürgen Hanneder, Review of *The Pandit. Traditional Scholarship in India* edited
26 by Michael Axels, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 155
27 (2001): 672. The material on Hacker presented in this paper, however, gives the lie to
28 Hanneder's comments.

- 29 43 See Corstiaan J. G. van der Burg, "The Place of Sanskrit in Neo-Hindu Ideologies:
30 From Religious Reform to National Awakening," in *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*, ed. Jan E. M. Houben (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), pp. 367–381.
31 44 As Halbfass too notes, Hacker was obsessed with the idea of difference: He does not
32 "make any serious effort to demonstrate" the "general absence" of tolerance from "all
33 other religious and cultural traditions." "What he is ultimately concerned about is its
34 distinction [i.e., of Hindu 'inclusivism'] from the Christian approach to other reli-
35 gions, which presupposes, in his view, a clear recognition of *others* in their *otherness*."
36 Halbfass, "An Uncommon Orientalist," p. 12. Halbfass does not go far enough,
37 however, in condemning Hacker. For, what is ultimately at stake in his work is not
38 merely the *incommensurability* of different religious traditions (such an idea might,
39 conceivably, make Hacker a religious *pluralist*), but the *superiority* of his own
40 Western Protestant tradition. His entire engagement with India thus falls not under the
41 category of serious scientific scholarship, but a polemical *Auseinandersetzung* (con-
42 flict or engagement) in the literal sense of a separating out and placing apart.
43 45 These anonymous works have, unfortunately, not been identified as yet, but the
44 application of stylistics by future researchers could lead to more insight into the
45 person and agenda of Hacker.
46 46 "Paul Hacker's work has a very sound scholarly and philological basis; but it is cer-
47 tainly not uncommitted scholarship. His personal religious and philosophical back-
48 ground is revealed in his theological writings." Schmithausen, "Foreword," p. viii.
49 47 We have found this to be true, for instance, of all Hacker's contributions to *Vox Fidei*.
50 Even the three letters we have found so far, "Küng-Gespräch ein Skandal" and "Zur
51 Protestantisierung" (both 1977) and "In der Kirche bleiben" (1978) are signed "Prof.
52 Dr. Paul Hacker" (the articles, in contrast, are simply by "Prof. Paul Hacker").
53 48 Curiously, although Hacker in his evangelical writings does not hesitate to refer to
54 his "academic" works in Indology to buttress his arguments, the reverse is not true:
55 The disparity suggests that while Indological "research findings" could be used

- 1 subversively for prosecuting religious agendas, this was only true as long as the
2 investment of these researches by theological and political concerns could be kept
3 secret.
- 4 49 Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory*
5 35.4 (1996): 99.
- 6 50 This is also true of the more recent period; for examples, see the comments in Jürgen
7 Hanneder, "Search the Web: 'Deutsche Indologie,'" in *Marburger Indologie im*
8 *Umbruch: Zur Geschichte des Faches 1845–1945* (Munich: P. Kircheim Verlag,
9 2010), especially pp. 86–87.
- 10 51 See, for example, Valentina Stache-Rosen, *German Indologists: Biographies of*
11 *Scholars in Indian Studies Writing in German*, 2nd revised edition by Agnes Stache-
12 Weiske (Delhi: Max Mueller Bhawan, 1990), pp. 241–242.
- 13 52 Adluri and Bagchee, *The Nay Science*.
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